St. Matthews Cape Cod-style home is full of Christmas cheer

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More back GOP tax bill

Ex-critics Rubio, Corker throw support behind legislation, nearly ensuring passage in Senate

As Republicans in the House and Senate hammered out the final details of legislation they say will overhaul the nation's tax code to help the American people, the bill's odds of passage in the Senate appeared strong.

Sens. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and Bob Corker, R-Tenn., who had both expressed displeasure with the tax bill, changed their tunes Friday and said they planned to vote for the measure.

The GOP's 52-seat Senate majority leaves little room for error, and Arizona's Jeff Flake and Maine's Susan Collins are undecided, but Vice President Mike Pence could cast the tiebreaking vote. But Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Thad Cochran, R-Miss., are facing medical problems that have caused them to miss votes this week.

Page 1B

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas, speaks to reporters in the Capitol on Friday about the GOP tax bill. J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Gov. Matt Bevin speaks during the announcement Friday of the new EnerBlu factory planned for Pikeville. The battery maker also will move its headquarters from California to Lexington. PHOTOS BY ALTON STRUPP/COURIER JOURNAL

Calif. company injecting $412M into 'Silicon Holler'

Most will go for factory to be built in Pikeville

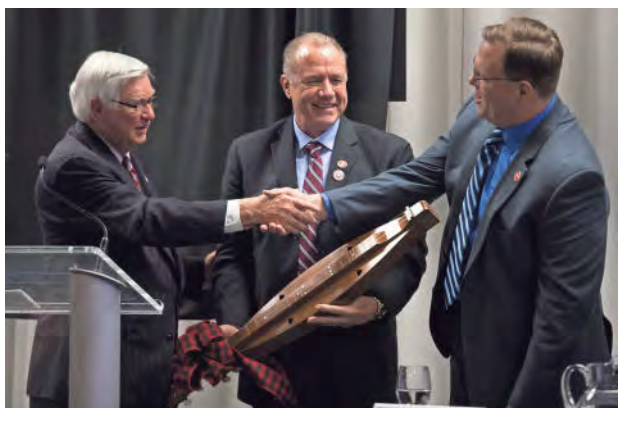
Grace Schneider
Louisville Courier Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Gov. Matt Bevin and other Kentucky officials on Friday hailed the plans for an advanced battery maker to create a new facility in Pikeville as a game-changer that would transform Eastern Kentucky and the entire state.

"We're in the front end of something extraordinary," Bevin said during an announcement in the city.

The governor and several officials touted the $412 million investment planned by EnerBlu, a California-based power and energy solutions company, as a way to revive economically ailing coal country and reverse the migration of thousands of families who lost high-paying mining jobs.

"Today, we can start inviting those families back home," said Fifth District U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers. The Republican described the investment as a big step toward creating "Silicon Holler," where the economic base is gradually evolving into a center for high-tech manufacturing and renewable energy.



U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers, left, presents a handmade dulcimer to Michael Weber and Daniel Elliott of EnerBlu during the announcement Friday.

EnerBlu expects to build a $372 million factory in Pikeville and a separate $40 million research and development center in Lexington. The Eastern Kentucky operation is slated for the bulk of the jobs paying an average of $39 an hour, while Lexington's 110

See ENERBLU, Page 8A

Belcher rejects Johnson's criticism

'I don't wish that on anybody,' she says

Tom Loftus
Louisville Courier Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

FRANKFORT, Ky. – Former state Rep. Linda Belcher rejected a suggestion by the widow of Rep. Dan Johnson that she participated in an effort by liberal organizations to destroy Johnson.

Linda Belcher

"The only thing I really want to say at this point is that I know the pain of losing a husband. I've been through that. I don't wish that on anybody," Belcher said when asked if she had a response to comments about her Thursday by Johnson's widow, Rebecca Johnson, in an interview with WHAS 11.

State Rep. Dan Johnson, a Mount Washington Republican, died Wednesday night in what the Bullitt County coroner has said was a suicide. The death came after an expose by the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting that, among other things, linked him to arson cases, revealed repeated alcohol violations at his church and alleged Johnson had molested a 17-year-old girl in late 2012.

Since his death, Rebecca Johnson has given interviews to WHAS and other television media in which she has cast him as a victim of "trash" journalism and has said she will run for his House seat.

Stephen George, executive editor at Louisville Public Media, which includes the investigative reporting center, said in a statement that the staff there was "shocked and saddened" by Johnson's death. But George stood behind the story, which was reported over seven months and included hundreds of interviews, saying it "revealed Johnson's history of lies and deception."

Belcher, a Shepherdsville Democrat and retired schoolteacher, said she

See JOHNSON, Page 6A

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